

NANCY TOOMEY *Fine Art*

BETTY MERKEN

ARTIST STATEMENT

In contrast to the majority of contemporary printmakers, who employ traditional printmaking methods such as etching and lithography to create multiples of an image, each print I make is one of a kind—a “unique” print, or monotype. Monotypes are by nature innovative. They are paintings made on metal plates and run through the press, once.

Printmaking has evolved from my process driven work as a painter. For 16 years I have approached each print as a singular work of art, exploring ever expanding sizes, colors, materials and processes. Many of my prints have been acquired by museums. Curators and critics have described my prints as having the authority of paintings and they have placed my work within the context of the work of Josef Albers, Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko, Donald Judd, and James Turrell, defining my position within the context of modern and contemporary art.

The “Illumination Series” of monotypes are inspired by observations of the manner in which light affects color, with its passing movement and changes. I am fascinated by the power of color to evoke emotion and to encourage contemplation, allowing the viewer to become the subject of the work.

At the same time I am driven by the freedom to question, “What constitutes a print?” In the “Slab Series” I am creating sculptures from prints, pushing the boundaries of printmaking from two dimensions into three dimensions, and challenging the role that context plays in creating an aesthetic experience.

The sculptures create a platform for dialogue where the focus shifts to the physical presence of the work in space, rather than on the wall. The sculptures focus on a single color, challenge the material expression of paper, and explore possibilities of printmaking as a three dimensional medium. The Ultramarine Blue and Vermillion Red colors of the sculptures, as well as their textures, which are created by hand deckling each sheet of paper, are inspired by slabs of marble in Pietrasanta, Italy and by the colors of Italian frescoes.